



# Barquilla de la Santa Maria

BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society -  
Diocese of Columbus

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## German Catholic Humor in the *Ohio Waisenfreund*

by Alan Borer

But although there is much to admire about Germany, I would have to say that German humor is to me about as inscrutable as it gets. There's a certain taste for slapstick, a form of 'humor' I always think is too mean-spirited to be funny. There are a few jokes, but I hardly ever get them. And otherwise its just not funny. - Manchester (UK) *Guardian*, December 24, 2004

I'm Irish-Catholic, 3/4 Irish 1/4 German, and I'm pretty sure the humor comes from the Irish side, since the Germans have never been known as one of the great fun races of all time. The problem with Germans, Germans are very literal and American humor, we very often are very perverse in our humor and we will say the direct opposite of what we mean. - Bob Newhart, Commencement Address, Catholic University of America, May 17, 1997

I grew up with German Catholic grandparents on my father's side. As a child, I attended family gatherings with loud, red faced great uncles and cousins, where jokes and funny stories flowed freely. They represented the dwindling survivors of German ghetto culture – a rural ghetto, which may have been atypical, but a subculture where

people born before World War I grew up speaking German and going to Mass in a church where the gravestones outside read "Gestorben" instead of "died."

It was only as an adult that I began to hear of German culture having no sense of humor. Germans were orderly, hard workers but would never crack a smile. They were almost as bad as those Catholics and their secretive confessionals and obsession with sin. Thus, to be a German Catholic was to have two strikes against you in the laughter department!

Now being a German-Catholic, I knew this was stereotypical nonsense. In my childhood, I knew German Catholics who were both morose and full of jokes and humor. Yet even I was a little surprised to find historical evidence for this in the pages of a newspaper called the "*Ohio Waisenfreund*," literally, "Ohio Orphan's Friend."

The story of John Joseph Jessing is perhaps well known in Central Ohio Catholic circles as the founder of the Pontifical College Josephinum. The college he founded educated and educates seminarians to this day. Now surrounded by the sprawl of Columbus, the Josephinum was built as a quiet retreat from the world to form men to be Catholic priests. In Monsignor Jessing's time, this particularly meant German-speaking priests. Jessing, a former Westphalian artillery soldier,

saw the need for priests for the thousands of German-speaking immigrants who settled in the American midwest.

In addition to starting the Collegium Josephinum (as it was first known) in September of 1888, Monsignor Jessing also fought for German-American culture on another flank by starting a German-language newspaper, the *Ohio Waisenfreund*. The newspaper (at first it was just called *Ohio*) began in Pomeroy, Ohio, on May 2, 1873, where Jessing resided as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in that city. Jessing moved the newspaper with him to the Josephinum in Columbus. The *Ohio Waisenfreund* achieved a national circulation of 55,000 at its peak, and was a crucial organ for the spread and maintenance of German Catholic culture.

In its heyday before the beginning of World War I, the *Ohio Waisenfreund* was not simply a bugle call for Gothic Catholicism. While all articles printed there were acceptable to the Church magisterium, the paper was not simply a Sunday School tract. I examined the first issue of the 1900s [January 3, 1900], hoping that it was a typical. In it I found articles about religion, certainly, but also about contemporary politics, news items from Europe and the United States, several pages of editorials, and an interesting section with the heading, *Kaffeebohnen*, which literally translates as “Coffee Beans.”

Monsignor Jessing, in an editorial in his newly established newspaper, wrote that he would



publish “*fine stories*, selections of poetry and wit, and riddles. (March 1873).” The *Kaffeebohnen* items attempted to fulfill that directive. They were for humor, German, Catholic and otherwise. I wondered if racism and antisemitism, an unhappy memory of so much that is German, would show its face. In this I was pleasantly surprised. I dusted off my (admittedly limited) knowledge of written German, and give three examples:

### Joke #1

*Drei Studenten begegneten einem alten Juden, den sie zur Zielscheibe ihres Witzes machen zu können glaubten. — “Guten Morgen, Vater Abraham!” rief der Erste. “Guten Morgen, Vater Isaak!” rief der Zweite. “Guten Morgen, Vater Jakob!” rief der Dritte. “Sie irren sich, meine Herren,” versetzte der Jude lächelnd, “ich bin weder Abraham, noch Isaak, noch Jacob, sondern Saul der Sohn Kis [Kish], welcher ausging, seines Vaters Esel zu suchen — und, siehe, hier habe ich sie gefunden.”*

Translation:

Three students encountered an old Jew, who thought to make him the butt of their joke. “Good morning, Father Abraham,” called the first. “Good Morning, Father Isaac,” called the second. “Good morning, Father Jacob,” called the third. “You are in error, my gentlemen,” countered the Jew with a laugh. “I am neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, but rather Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to look for his father’s asses - and see, I have found them here.”

Comment:

Germans and Catholics have a reputation of mocking our Jewish brethren, many times (but not exclusively) deserved. I was interested then to find a fairly respectful joke in which a Jewish man turns the tables on three disrespectful young

people who took his Judaism at its stereotyped face value. (See 1 Samuel 9:3 for the background of Saul and the asses.)

### Joke #2

*Ein Bauernjunge brachte ein Kalb in die Stadt, welches sich so sehr sträubte, dass er es mit beiden Händen festhalten musste. Der Pfarrer, der ihn kannte, begegnete ihm zu Pferde. "Grossian!" rief er, "siehst Du nicht, wer Dir begegnet? Kannst du nicht die Mütze abnehmen.?"*

*"Na gleich, Herr Pfarrer!" erwidert der Bursche, "steigen's nur erst 'runter und halte's mir das Kalb."*

Translation:

A farm boy (literally, yokel) brought a calf to town, which so disturbed it that he had to hold on to it with both hands. A priest on horseback, who knew him, encountered him. "Churl!" he called "don't you know whom you are encountering? Don't you know enough to remove your cap?" "Just so, Father," replied the fellow, "climb down here first and hold the calf for me."

Comment:

Our own humor tradition is fond of making fun of rural people as being ill-bred and ill-cultured. The interesting point here is that a priest became the butt of a joke, showing that even priests could be cut down a peg in what was an official, Church sponsored organ.

### Joke #3

*Ein Arbeiter führte ein Pferd vor die Thüre, um es zu satteln, legte aber den Sattel verkehrt auf und schnallte ihn fest. Ein Eckensteher machte ihn darauf aufmerksam mit dem Worten: "Dummerjahn, Du sattelst ja das Pferd verkehrt." Ohne sich irre machen zu*

*lassen, anwortete er ganz gleichgiltig: "Schafskopp [for kopf?], wecsst [typo for weisst?] Du denn, wo ich hinreiten will?"*

Translation:

A worker led a horse outside the door, to saddle it, but he reversed the saddle and buckled it on tightly. A day laborer drew his attention to this with the words: "Simpleton, you saddled the horse backwards." But without hesitating he said indifferently, "Sheephead, do you know where I want to ride from here?"

Comment:

This is another story in which the working class is belittled, but then gets the upper hand. The *Waisenfreund* readership was likely very much a workingman or blue-collar one, and this anecdote was probably enjoyed for its topsy-turvy look at class relations.

I have no more than a feeble knowledge of German, and am certainly no student of the history or psychology of humor. I have not made a thorough study of the (presumably) German folk humor that appeared in the *Ohio Waisenfreund*. I did not make a concerted study of many issues, but grabbed at a single date with the full knowledge that that this may or may not have been a "typical" issue. This was no more than a casual experiment to see if I could gather an understanding of what my great-grandparents laughed at when they read what was available to them.

I know from family legend that my great-grandparents read the American Catholic German-language press. At least in the years around the turn of the twentieth century, the editors of the *Ohio Waisenfreund* devoted a good chunk of their newspaper to humor. Not the antisemitic or rural-baiting of earlier and later parts of the German press, but a humor that German Catholics can be proud of to this day: a healthy respect for the Jewish faith, an avoidance

of uncritical priest-worship, and an understanding of the working class. Whether or not these “kaffeebohnen” still “work” as humor is left up to the individual, but they do reveal a mite of the lost German-American Catholic culture of our ancestors.

#### SOURCES

Background on the Josephinum comes from Ralph Frasca, “The Federal Government Suppresses a Catholic Seminary Newspaper,” *American Catholic Studies* 115 (#4, 2004), pp: 1-20; Roger P. Cooney, ed., *The Spirit of John Joseph Jessing: Priest, Orphan’s Friend, Visionary* (Columbus: Pontifical College

Josephinum, 1999); Leonard J. Fick, *The Jessing Legacy 1888-1998: A Centennial History of the Pontifical College Josephinum* (Columbus: Kairos Books, 1988). Complete runs of the *Ohio Waisenfreund* are available on paper and microfilm at the Josephinum’s A. T. Wehrle Memorial Library, as well as several other research libraries.

*Editor’s note: We hope those who read German will pardon our use of “ss” in place of the “ess-tset” in several places. Our system will not permit even the use of a beta for that character.*

### **Tombstones at St. Mary, Linton Township, Coshocton County**

This cemetery is at the steep, hillside site of the former St. Mary Church, on the west side of Coshocton County Road 137, just south of County Road 123. The tombstones were read about 1950 by Helen M. Meredith of Coshocton and “published” in the typescript “Cemetery Records of Coshocton county, Ohio, Vol. I” (copy in the former State Library of Ohio collection, now at the Columbus Metropolitan Library). A second reading was made by the late Msgr. Herman E. Mattingly on December 19, 1977 and was filed at the Catholic Record Society. Several tombstones had disappeared in the interval. A third reading (of lesser quality) was published in 2000 in *Linton Township: Reminiscing through Linton Township* by Doris J. Baker and others (pp 174-175). Donald Schlegel visited the site on June 25, 2006 in order to reconcile discrepancies between the two earliest readings.

The stones are distributed among four distinct areas: several near the southeast, or lower or front, of the lot; three in the northeast; the majority on top of the hill on the south side; and a few on top of the hill on the north side. Some tombstones are in clearly distinguishable rows, while others are only approximately so.

Rows are numbered here from front to rear of the lot. The readings within the rows are not in any particular order. Several stones were illegible or face down when visited in 2006.

The reading by Msgr. Mattingly apparently was typed in roughly locational order. In order to help determine the locations of stones that now are missing, the order of his reading is indicated below with the initials HEM and the numbers of the stones as he wrote them.

#### **Lower area, south**

##### Row 1

Dorothy F. Dau of E. L. & Clara Davidson,  
Aug. 18, 1915 - Mar. 2, 1916

Maria dau of B. & M. Smith died 1830 aged 2 yr’s & 6 mo [The year cannot be correct but all three readings determined that the inscription indeed says 1830. HEM 1]

Agnes dau of Valentine & Mathilda Gab died  
Sept 11, 1844 aged 1 yr & 1 mo [HEM 2]

Mary dau of G & B Boyer, Died Dec. 14, 1841  
(or 4), aged 12 yrs 6 mo 24 d [HEM 3]

##### Row 2

Joseph son of J & C Doll died Apr. 29, 1851  
aged 2 yrs [HEM 4]

Row 3  
Andrew Fehtar died June 2, 1851 aged 29 Y 8 M [HEM 5]

Row 4 (by and under pine tree)  
Jacob Crater aged 76 Y [HEM 7]  
Mathias Crater aged 31 Y [HEM 9]  
Ann dau of Nicholas & Ann Royer, died June 8, 1853 (?) aged 24 Y 11 M 18 D [All that remains of this stone is the date. This is a combination of all three readings.

HEM 10]  
David Bordenkercher, died July 12, 1847 aged 71 Y [HEM 11]  
Mathias Factor, died Feb. 16, 1850 in the 45th year of his age [HEM 12]  
Teobolt Klein died Nov. 16, 1842 aged 62 Y [HEM 15]

Row 5  
Modalane wife of Jacob Crider, died July 7, 1845, aged 42 years 2 months [HEM 8]  
Phillip Kromonaker died May 12, 1852 aged 51 Y [HEM 14]

#### **Lower area, north**

[Dennis Brannan a native of Monaghan County Ireland died Sept. 1865 aged 65 yr's  
[Dennis Francis son of Peter & M. Brannan died Jan. 8, 1863, aged 3 yrs & 4 mos  
Barney Brannon Co F 80th Ohio Inf  
Thomas McEvoy, born in Wicklow County, Ireland Died Feb. 19, 1860 [in the 30. year of his age, per Baker]

#### **Top of hill, south**

Row 1  
J B son of A & R Hartman born Nov. 8, 1856 died Dec. 26, 1857 [HEM 50; Meredith]  
George B son of A. & R. Hartman died June 21, 1873 aged 8 yrs 7 mo 9 ds [HEM 52]  
Row 2  
Joseph son of J. & M. Martine died Feb. 16, 1854 aged 1 yr 1 m 20 ds [HEM 51]  
Samuel son of J. & C. Scherrer died Dec. 4,

1870 aged 1 Mo & 4 Ds [HEM 46]  
Casper S. son of J. & M. Switzer died June 9, 1869 aged 3 hours [HEM 47]  
Samuel son of M & E Mortine died May 6, 1869 aged 8 Days [HEM 48]  
John M. son of A & R Hartman born May 18, 1858 died Jan. 16, 1862 [HEM 49]  
Elizabeth dau of Jacob & Sarah Lahna died May 27, 1876 aged 5 y 1 m 21 ds

Row 3  
Maria M. dau of M. & M. Heusser died July 22, 1854 aged 3 yrs 7 mos 20 ds [HEM 40]  
Francis B. son of J. & M. E. Martine died Jan. 24, 1865 aged 2 yrs 8 mos 9 das [Meredith; partial reading by Mattingly; nothing above the year was legible in 2006. HEM 41]  
Margaret E. dau of M. & F. Hiser died Dec. 19, 1863 aged 3 Y 7 M & 19 D [HEM 43]  
Sarah Ann dau of John & Rachel Hiser died Oct. 27, 1865 aged 8 M 10 D [HEM 44]

Row 4  
John Doll died Oct. 26, 1874 aged 59 Y 9 M 25 D [HEM 33; Meredith]  
Mary Ann dau of M. & M. Heusser died Jan. 31, 1855 aged 18 yrs 2 mos 26 das [HEM 35]  
Mary wife of Francis Sellars died Sept. 30, 1856 aged 42 yrs [HEM 36]  
Charlotte wife of Francis Amore born Oct. 11, 1808 died Jan. 24, 1896 [HEM 37]  
John Ashbaker died Sept. 22, 1857 aged 77 yrs 2 mos 28 ds [HEM 38]

Row 5  
[Catharine wife of J. Adam Martine died Feb. 6, 1877 aged 81 Years [HEM 27]  
[J. Adam Mortine died Sept. 15, 1866 aged 74 Y 8 M 21 D  
John son of John & Catharine Doll died June 17, 1865 aged 20 Y 6 M [HEM 29]  
Maria Anna Frau von Balthasar Schmitt geb: 1797 gest: 1 April 1871 [HEM 31]



Michael Heusser died Feb. 17, 1872 aged 32  
Yr 6 Ms [HEM 32]

Row 6

Balthasar Schmitt geb: 1792 died: June 16,  
1877 agd 80 Yrs 6 Mos [HEM 26]  
Jacob Lahna died Oct. 22, 1866 aged 59 y 10  
ms & 8 ds

Row 7

[Michael Mortine Dec. 7, 1835 - Oct. 12, 1917  
[Elizabeth Lahna Oct. 10, 1840 - Feb. 19,  
1908 [HEM 25]  
Seth C. Mortine June 15, 1879 - May 20, 1903

### Top of hill, north

Row 1

John Hallisy died Mar. 16, 1850 in the 45 yr of  
his age [HEM 16]  
James Halicy died June 13, 1874 aged 64 Y  
[HEM 17]

Row 2

John S. son of Patrick and Mary Crowley, died  
Nov. 12, 1850, aged 1 Y 2 M [HEM 18]

Row 3

Bertha B. dau. of Benj & Anna Bordenkircher  
died Jan. 21, 1891 aged 1 yr 10 m 13 ds  
[HEM 19]

Row 4

[John Bordenkircher died Dec. 12, 1878 in the  
74 year of his age [HEM 21]  
[Catherine wife of John Bordenkircher died  
July 19, 1878 in the 74 year of her age  
[Our Parents  
{Michael Hiser born Jan. 15, 1811, died Nov.  
17, 1888 [HEM 22]  
{Margaret, wife of Michael Hiser, born April 7,  
1807

Row 5

[Sebastian Dolick died Jan. 24, 1883 aged 65 Y  
& 5 D [HEM 23]  
[Rachel wife of S. Dolick

Row 6

John J. Scherrer died Sept. 13, 1878 aged 83  
yrs 5 mo & 5 ds [HEM 24]

### Stones Not Found in 2006

Mary E. dau of John & L. Bowers, died Jan.  
29, 1867, aged 1 Y 1 M 9 D [HEM 6]

Nicholas Davied died July 16, 1852 aged 30 Y  
2 M [HEM 13]

J. Nicholas Davied died July 16, 1853 aged 30  
yrs 2 mos [Meredith]

George Wiesenburgh died June 15, 1879 aged  
83 Y 2 M [HEM 20; Meredith]

David died March 25 aged  
[HEM 28]

David Aschbaker died Mar. 25, 1803 aged 37  
yrs 2 mos 9 das [Meredith] [The year  
perhaps was 1873; David was listed as  
twelve years old in the 1850 census.]

John Smith died July 24, 1864 aged 34 years  
[HEM 30; Meredith]

Frank Salars(?) died 1854 aged 66 Y —  
—— [HEM 34]

Francis Salrin died Feb. 17, 1851 aged 56 yrs  
10 mos 5 das [Meredith]

George son of G & B Boyer died May 3, 1854  
aged 3 M [HEM 39] [This seems to be a  
nearly illegible stone in row 3 in the top  
south area]

John son of J. & R. Hiser died May 11, 1863  
aged 3 yrs 6 mos [HEM 42; Meredith]

Matilda dau of ————— Lamna died  
June 3, 1875 aged 2 Y 4 M 4 D [HEM 45]

Matilda dau of Jacob & Sarah Lahma died  
June 3, 1875 aged 2 yrs 4 mos 1 da  
[Meredith]

John son of John & Catharine Aschbacher  
died Aug. 17, 1871 aged 1 Y 1 M 13 D  
[HEM 53]  
John E. son of John & Catherine Aschbaker  
died Aug. 17, 1874 aged 1 yr 1 mo 18 das  
[Meredith]

**Tombstones found by Meredith c 1950  
but not in 1977 or in 2006**

Adam Boyer died May 8, 1864 aged 66 yrs 11  
mos 10 das  
Martin Driass died Oct. 8, 1880 aged 57 yrs  
Francoise dau of P. & F. Ferry died July 5,  
1854 aged 44 yrs  
Susan wife of —ath Fitzsimons died Feb. 2,  
1860 aged 19 yrs  
Joseph son of A. & R. Hartman Dec. 7, 1862 -  
July 8, 1864  
James Murphy a native of Ireland died Feb. 4,  
1844 aged 52 yrs  
Elizabeth B. dau of Peter & Ann Ross died  
July 3, 1846 aged 3 mos 24 das  
Ferdinand son of — & M. Strasser died Jan.  
21, 1854 aged 2 mos 26 das  
Martha wife of George Wiesenburgh died Mar.  
1, 1880 aged 80 yrs 2 mos  
Francis Amore died Apr. 11, 1864 aged 68 yrs

**Burial Records from St. George Church,  
Coshocton  
Burials at St. Mary Cemetery**

1872, Feb. 19, Michael Hizer, age about 25  
years  
1874, January 2, James Crater, 77 years old,  
died on the 31st of cancer  
1874, June 15, James Hallissey, died the 13th,  
age 65 years  
1874, October 28, John Dole, died the 26th  
1877, June 17, Baltaser Smith, age 86, died  
yesterday  
1877, August 13, Elizabeth Hallissey, widow  
of James, died yesterday, age 72 years  
1878, February 7, Ava Martine, died the 6th,  
age 78 years

1878, August 10, Elizabeth Sherrer, wife of  
Jacob [or James], age 77 years, died on the  
8th  
1878, December 13, John Bordenkircher, died  
yesterday, age about 75 years  
1883, Jan. 26, Sebastian Dolick, died the 24th,  
age 66 years  
1896, Jan. 27, at "St. Ann, Linton Township,"  
Charlotte Amor, age 87 years, 3 months,  
13 days  
1903, May 20, buried May 22, Seth Mortine,  
age 24, at St. Mary's Old German  
Cemetery, Linton Township  
1917, Michael Mortine was buried in the Old  
Cemetery

**Abstracts from  
The Catholic Telegraph**

(Continued, from Vol. XXXII, No. 7)

September 8, 1855

There were one hundred and ten persons  
confirmed on Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday,  
last week of August, in the missions of Rev. Mr.  
Winands in Tuscarawas and Carrol counties. Of  
these a few were converts.

We regret having to announce the death of Mrs.  
ELIZA, wife of William M. ANDERSON, Esq., of  
Circleville. This excellent lady died on the 3d  
inst. From the day of her conversion to the  
Catholic faith until the day of her death, she  
edified all by her pious example.

The Most Rev. Archbishop was sufficiently  
recovered from his recent indisposition, to leave  
for Chillicothe on Monday to attend her funeral.

Collections for Seminary.

Rev. Emanuel Thienpont (Steubenville,)	\$10 00
St. Peter's Congregation do., .....	50 00
Do. do for the Orphan Asylum	20 00

September 15, 1855 [marked Sept. 18]

Page 1 and following contain the Story of The  
Nuns of Minsk, from "Pictures of Christian

Heroism.” Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren translated this or a similar story. Also, on page 3 is an account of the Miraculous Image of Our Lady of Lisse, translated from the French for the *Dublin Tablet*, which was the shrine where Madeleine’s grandfather was cured as a child.

DIED, near Somerset, Perry Co., Ohio, on the 28th of August, Mrs. PATIENCE LYNCH, wife of Mr. Patrick Lynch of same place, in the 69th year of her age. Deceased was an exemplary member of the Catholic congregation of Somerset...

The annual session of St. Joseph’s College was resumed on the 3d inst., with a fair prospect of patronage. The College is now under the direction of Rev. P. D. Noon, assisted by a competent faculty of teachers...

September 22, 1855

Church Collections for Seminary, for 1855.	
St. Lawrence’s, Ironton	\$ 30 00
Church of the Sacred Heart, Pomeroy	30 00
Gallipolis congregation	4 25
Rev. Mr. Liebe of Chillicothe	35 00

September 29, 1855

Ordination

Mr. James J. O’Donoghue was ordained sub-deacon by the Most Rev. Archbishop Purcell, in the Cathedral, on the Feast of the Nativity of the B.V.M.; on St. Matthew’s Day, deacon; and on last Ember Day, priest.

Third Quarter Subscribers (name, post office, date of issue):

- P. B. Ankeny, Washington, Guernsey, Sept. 1
  - Leander H. Bennett, Canal Dover, Sept. 8
  - John Brady, Steubenville, July 21
  - John A. Browsers, Canal Dover, Sept. 8
  - Rev. J. W. Brummer, Zanesville, Sept. 1
  - Moran Bushua, Somerset, July 7
  - Daniel Dougherty, Woodsfield, Sept. 1
  - Stephen Dougherty, Woodsfield, Sept. 1
  - William Dougherty, Woodsfield, Sept. 1
  - W. M. Edwards, Chauncey, July 21
  - J. Fagan, Wilkesville, Aug. 11
  - Peter P. McVeigh, Wilkesville, Aug. 11
  - Rev. James Meagher, Columbus, Sept. 8
  - Rev. Peter Perry, Marietta, Aug. 11
  - Mrs. Postlewaite, Homer, July 21
  - Arthur Taggart, Stockport, Aug. 11
  - Rev. Mr. Thienpont, Steubenville, Sept. 8
  - Peter Timony, Hulls, Athens Co., Sept. 8
- (To be continued)

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